

## **FREDERICK COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

Public Safety Training Center  
5370 Public Safety Place  
Frederick, MD 21704

### **MINUTES of February 28, 2017 Meeting**

I. The meeting was called to order.

II. The following members were present: Mari Lee, Tonya Amedon, Kavonte' Duckett, Lisa Clark, Francisco Alves, Adam Book, Annette Breiling, Lee Whisner, Irene Packer-Halsey, Gene Stanton, Felicia Turner and Roger Sobkowiak.

Liaison members Jessica Fitzwater, Jet Reid and Donna Kuzemchak were present.

III. Other persons present were FPD Lt. Thomas Tokarz and Corporal Simon Temple, Carol Gosnell, Nancy Lavin from the *Frederick News-Post*, and Ernie Marin from FCPS.

IV. An invitation was extended to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

V. The January 2017 HRC meeting minutes were reviewed. With one correction to section 10, reflecting that Irene Packer-Halsey rather than Mari Lee had reported on the NBPWC luncheon, the minutes were approved unanimously.

VI. Members of the public were invited to make comments. Lt. Tokarz discussed the FPD annual report on recruitment and hiring. He noted that Corporal Temple had moved to FPD personnel one year ago and is the primary recruiter. The annual report shows that FPD has recruited at many different locations, including PA, NYC, Andrews AFB, colleges and universities. 716 people applied in 2016 for employment as police officers. 396 were white; only 162 showed up to be tested. 200 African Americans applied, but only 57 showed up for testing. Of the 57 African American applicants, 22 failed the written test. Next year FPD intends to offer training at meetings to help applicants pass the written test. Lateral applicants (persons already employed as police officers elsewhere) amounted to 43, and 6 were hired. That number included several African Americans and one Asian person. FPD provides training to new officers in many different cultural competency areas. FPD intends to go to college classes and try to interest criminal justice students in law enforcement careers. FPD spoke to students at a tech school in Hagerstown last year and told them it was important to stay on the right side of the law because it could affect their ability to be hired. FPD has started an Explorer program. Irene Packer-Halsey asked about FPD's efforts to recruit Hispanics.

VII. Tonya Amedon introduced Brandon Chapman, who ran the Police Athletic League (PAL) program for more than two years and is now employed at the Housing Authority. He spoke on

his recent experiences with local law enforcement agencies. In one encounter he said that his car was followed by an FPD patrol unit. After looking at his license, the officer asked if he knew it was expired. He said it had just expired a few days before. Another FPD unit arrived and an officer said that a call had reported a green Denali, a car like his, had been involved in suspicious activity.

Previously, Brandon said that he was stopped by FCSO for not having operable license plate lighting. The deputy told him, "When you drove past, I couldn't see your tags in my rear view mirror." He was not issued a ticket or warning. Brandon said there was nothing wrong with the light on his license plate and it worked just fine.

About a year before that he was stopped by an FPD unit for a defective tail light. 3 or 4 more police cars arrived. "Sgt. Tokarz was there and explained to the other officers that I was one of the good guys."

Brandon said these encounters did not feel good because he had kids with him each time and had to explain to them what was happening. He learned that FPD later arrested another man who was driving a green Denali for selling drugs. His nickname was "Black" and he had dreadlocks down his back. Brandon said his own lawyer told him his Yukon Denali would probably be viewed by most police officers as a drug car.

Irene Packer-Halsey said that police need to be trained not to assume someone is bad based on the way they dress.

Tonya Amedon asked Lt. Tokarz what FPD was doing to help young police officers, and he said emphasis was placed on getting them out of their cars and into the community and talking with people.

Brandon said that Lucas Village had the PAL program, and Officer Mike Figgins was active in the community. He said it would be nice if more officers stopped and talked with people. Brandon said that he encourages everyone to live by his motto, "Be real. Be righteous. Be relevant."

VIII. Treasurer Lisa Clark reported that the HRC has \$3,786.84 in funds on hand.

IX. Officers' Reports: The Executive Committee was asked to consider taking action on recommending the creation of sanctuary jurisdictions, and David Kaye is considering whether to present something on this at the March 14 Executive Committee meeting. Mari Lee invited Irene Packer-Halsey to attend the March Executive Committee meeting to discuss the questions she raised about adopting criteria for deciding on HRC awards.

Mari Lee said that the concerns Irene Packer-Halsey had expressed about the current political climate will be discussed at the upcoming retreat on March 18, along with a general discussion about the importance of committee meetings and rebooting several important functions of the HRC. Mari Lee encouraged all HRC members to attend the retreat.

X. Liaison reports: Jet Reid gave a very informative talk about homeless students in the Frederick County Public Schools, and handed out written materials that provided many details. Many homeless students receive free and/or reduced cost meals, and some receive housing assistance. While the majority of homeless students are white, the percentage of minority students is disproportionately high in relation to the racial makeup of our community. To put things in perspective, Jet noted that 715 students receive free and/or reduced cost meals, and that is the same number of students that attend an average middle school.

Jet said that Student Homeless Initiative Partnership (SHIP) is the best resource available, and even assists students after they graduate.

Donna Kuzemchak reported that the bust of former Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney is scheduled to be removed soon. It along with an interpretive plaque about the Dred Scott decision and the bust of Governor Thomas Johnson will be relocated from in front of City Hall to Mount Olivet Cemetery. Donna also said that the city has created a great video on the Laboring Sons cemetery, and it's on both the city's website and cable television channel. Donna said there is a lot going on at the city, including a budget hearing on April 3 and discussion about whether or not Frederick should declare itself to be a sanctuary city or adopt a human rights resolution.

XI. Old business: Mari Lee, Annette Breiling, Roger Sobkowiak, Francisco Alves, Adam Book and Miles Ward attended the Anti-Racism Training on February 11. Everyone agreed it was productive, rewarding and very thought provoking.

At the MLK Beloved Community Potluck in January, some political comments were made that upset some attendees. Annette Breiling said that efforts were made to resolve things, and another meeting to promote understanding will take place in March.

XII. Director's Report: Miles Ward complemented the HRC on its great attendance and encourage members to come to the retreat and start selling tickets and ads, and make nominations for the upcoming Awards Dinner.

XIII. New business: Planting Hope announced it is cancelling its event for this year. Debbie Peaks has resigned from the HRC. Mari Lee is formulating a public statement on community concerns and invites members to comment on her draft. Roger Sobkowiak offered a number of very informative comments and suggestions about inclusiveness, and things the HRC could be doing in the community. He said that the HRC needs more data to create a better picture of what's going on in the community. In schools, the county, the city, police. Look at injustice. Look at racism. He asked if the HRC thought it should have a big meeting each year with community leaders and representatives to present this data, and create some best practices. He asked that HRC members review the documents he prepared and get their suggestions to him no later than one day before the upcoming retreat, when these ideas will be discussed and considered again. Roger said that the question he hopes to answer is, "What are we going to do about fixing this?"

XIV. Those attending who chose to do so made brief final comments.

XV. The meeting was adjourned.